

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

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CHAPTER EIGHT

"THEY . . . CRUCIFIED THE LORD OF GLORY"

"The best work is to preach CHRIST crucified, whether amidst calm or the sounds of controversy, assured that this alone makes way, healing the wounded conscience and cleansing the saint from all remaining sin; and the victory is to that Church, in the old world and the new, in the homes of our ripest Christianity and in the darkest outfields of our missions, which shall most earnestly, unswervingly, devoutly renew that ancient confession: **'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,'** and shall turn it most gratefully and jubilantly into song, the song alike of earth and Heaven: **'Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'**" -- PRINCIPAL JOHN CAIRNS

Paul realized that the preaching of CHRIST crucified is to them that perish foolishness: **"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"** (I Corinthians 1:17-18); that it was a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles: **"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness"** (I Corinthians 1:23), and yet he determined not to have any other message, although it caused him searching of heart, weakness, fear and much trembling, than CHRIST and Him crucified: **"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"** (I Corinthians 2.3).

This message of the Cross is so great a mystery, although it revealed the wisdom and the power of GOD, that it is revealed only through the SPIRIT who searches all things even the deep things of GOD: **"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"** (I Corinthians 1:10).

In this connection of thought Paul uses the startling expression regarding the rulers of the world, ignorant of GOD's wisdom, that **" . . . had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"** (I Corinthians 2:8).

In his address to the elders of Ephesus, Paul uses words that are even bolder and more arresting: **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28).

We shrink from such bold and startling implications, the Lord of Glory on the Cross, the blood of GOD -- but when we try to soften down the words, we find that the Greek text leaves no alternative.

Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians, fifty years later than Paul's letter, that believers were "kindled into living fire by the blood of GOD." Tertullian, a hundred years later, uses the same expression "the blood of GOD." In the other passage also the Greek text is undoubtedly genuine and the words were written by Paul twenty-seven years after the event -- before the Gospels themselves were current -- " . . . **had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**"

"Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah" (Psalm 24:10). Both in the Old and New Testament the Lord of Glory signifies He whose attribute is glory: "**The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein**" (Psalm 24:1) and "**And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran**" (Acts 7:2) and "**That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him**" (Ephesians 1:17) and "**My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons**" (James 2:1), the Lord to Whom glory belongs as His native right.

The expression is theologically important because it implies the Deity of our Lord. In passages like I Corinthians 11:20, "**the Lord's death**": "**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lords death till he come,**" and in I Corinthians 11:27, "the body and blood of the Lord": "**Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,**" the import is similar but the language less startling.

Even in the days of His flesh, the Saviour was to Paul the Lord to Whom all glory belongs as His native right. To him, no less than to John, the Word who became flesh, was "**in the beginning with God; and the Word was God.**"

There is no mystery in Heaven or earth so great as this -- a suffering Deity, an ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR nailed to the Cross.

Yet this is what the words imply.

It is at the Cross that we see in CHRIST the fulness of GOD's love and mercy bodily.

It is at this point, in the last resort, that we become convinced -- as the Centurion was -- of His Deity.

It is a work that only GOD could do, which CHRIST works there "and the soul that is won for it is won for GOD in Him."

CHRIST is to Paul, through His death and resurrection, manifested as the very centre of the universe. He is the primary source of all creation, its principle of unity, its goal, and the

explanation of all its mysteries: "**Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence**" (Colossians 1:13-18). No one can read this passage and deny that it teaches CHRIST's equality in glory with GOD.

In reference to this same passage on the deity of "**his dear son: in whom we have redemption,**" the Church theologian, John Cordelier, says: "If the Cross be anything at all it is the ground-plan of the universe. It stretches from Nebula to Nebula linking the furthest limits of the worlds, holding out to them the wounded hands of Love. All progress is born of that clash of love and pain which is the secret of its heart; its mysterious torment lies at the root of all our joy. It is odd indeed that any biologist can be other than a Christian, since he finds on every hand Christianity's sternest symbol scored deep in the very foundations of the House of Life; finds pain, struggle, and sacrifice of the individual to be as essential to the diurnal processes of reproduction as to the slow-growing perfection of the type. Turn to the heights, turn to the deep, turn within, turn without; everywhere thou shalt find the Cross."

The same thought occurs in Studdert Kennedy's poem, "*The Suffering GOD*" : --

"Father, if He the CHRIST, were Thy REVEALER,
Truly the First Begotten of the Lord,
Then must Thou be a Sufferer and a HEALER
Pierced to the heart by the sorrow of the sword.

Then must it mean, not only that Thy sorrow
Smote Thee that once upon the lonely tree,
But that to-day, to-night, and on the morrow
Still it will come, O Gallant GOD, to Thee.

* * * * *

Give me, for light, the sunshine of Thy sorrow;
Give me, for shelter, shadow of Thy cross;
Give me to share the glory of Thy morrow,
Gone from my heart the bitterness of loss."

It is not only that we see in CHRIST's death the supreme manifestation of GOD's love, but also of His infinite sorrow and compassion. "**Like as a Father pitieth his children,**" is in the same Psalm that tells us that "**As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us**" (Psalm 103:12-13). "Sorrow and love flow mingled down," on the Cross - the sorrow of GOD and the love of GOD.

The whole Christian doctrine of the Atonement is rooted in the doctrine of the deity of CHRIST.

Our belief in the latter determines our faith in the former. No mere man can pay the penalty of another man's sin. All objections to the vicarious sacrifice of CHRIST disappear before the tremendous fact of the majesty of the Person of JESUS. *"It is perfectly true," says Dr. Gresham Machen, "that the CHRIST of modern naturalistic reconstruction never could have suffered for the sins of others; but it is very different in the case of the Lord of Glory. And if the notion of vicarious atonement be so absurd as modern opposition would lead us to believe, what shall be said of the Christian experience that has been based upon it. The modern liberal Church is fond of appealing to experience. But where shall true Christian experience be found if not in the blessed peace which comes from Calvary? That peace comes only when a man recognizes that all his striving to be right with GOD, all his feverish endeavour to keep the law before he can be saved, is unnecessary, and that the Lord JESUS has wiped out the handwriting that was against Him by dying instead of him on the Cross. Who can measure the depth of the peace and joy that comes from this blessed knowledge? Is it a theory of the atonement, a delusion of man's fancy? Or is it the very truth of GOD?"*

When Paul speaks of JESUS CHRIST as suffering on the Cross in such terms as we have quoted, he deals with facts so sublime that he calls them "**the deep things of God**" (I Corinthians 2:10).

These matters are so deep that they are unfathomable to human philosophy.

So high that they elude the most piercing gaze of the intellect.

In parts of the great Pacific ocean deep-sea sounding apparatus fails. There are stellar spaces and nebulas that will not yield their secrets to the largest telescopes. "**But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him**" (I Corinthians 2:9).

But GOD reveals them even unto babes by His HOLY SPIRIT, and although we cannot understand it, we can fall down in utter gratitude and humility.

"When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the PRINCE of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride."

There was no separation of the two natures of our Lord on the Cross.

His real humanity and His real deity were not mixed, nor confounded, but distinct and actually, both, wholly present. "**To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation**" (II Corinthians 5:19).

The sacrifice was not the human CHRIST pleasing GOD; it was GOD in CHRIST reconciling man and in another sense reconciling Himself.

It was not the death of a heroic man in obedience to GOD's will; it was the death of the Son of GOD for the sins of the world.

Here, if anywhere, in the Gospel story CHRIST manifested His glory -- a glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The atonement was an act of the whole Godhead.

For GOD, the Father, so loved the world that He gave; GOD the Son laid down His life for others; GOD the HOLY SPIRIT filled JESUS with His presence and power to endure such a death, and overcome it by His glorious resurrection: "**And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead**" (Romans 1:4).

Not only at Bethlehem but on Calvary we may sing with the angels, "**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men**" (Luke 2.14).

"Therefore," says Forsythe, "we press the words to their fullness of meaning: GOD was in CHRIST reconciling, not reconciling through CHRIST, but actually present as CHRIST reconciling, doing in CHRIST His own work of reconciliation. It was done by Godhead itself; and not by the SON alone. The old theologians were right when they insisted that the work of redemption was the work of the Trinity -- Father, SON and HOLY SPIRIT; and we express it when we baptize into the new life of reconciliation in the threefold name."

We must, however, go deeper still if we would know something of this mystery. *It must not remain a mere doctrine but become an experience.* We crucified the Lord of glory. We were purchased by His blood.

Hear Anselm meditating in the night watches before the Cross:

"What hast Thou done
O most sweet JESUS, O FRIEND most dear, to be entreated thus? . . .
I am the blow which pained Thee;
I the author of Thy death;
I that laboured to torture Thee."

And then he turns to us with the words that still ring clearly in our hearts:

"Put all thy trust in His death once for all:
have no confidence in anything else:
confide wholly in that death:
cover thyself wholly in that alone,
wrap thyself wholly up in that death."

Hear the learned and scholarly Bernard:

"My highest philosophy is to know JESUS, and JESUS crucified."

For "Calvary is the meeting place of lovers."

Listen to the prayer ascribed to Francis:

"O my Lord JESUS CHRIST, two graces do I beseech Thee to grant me before I die;

the first that, during my life-time, I may feel in my soul and in my body, so far as may be possible, that pain which Thou, sweet Lord, didst suffer in the hour of Thy most bitter passion;

the second is, that I may feel in my heart, so far as may be possible, that exceeding love whereby Thou, Son of GOD, wast enkindled to bear willingly such passion for us sinners."

The death of CHRIST differs, we know, from the death of prophets, patriots and martyrs in many respects.

- It was foretold in prophecy;
- it was for the propitiation of sin;
- it was accompanied by manifestation;
- it was followed by supernatural victory over death and resurrection.

But the real point of difference is in the Person who died. "**Truly this was the Son of God.**" In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The Word was made flesh and crucified for us.

"The blood of GOD out-poured upon the tree!
So reads the Book. O mind receive the thought;
Nor helpless murmur, thou has vainly sought
Thought-room within thee for such mystery.
Thou foolish mindling! Dost thou hope to see
Undazed, untottering, all that GOD hath wrought?
Before His mighty 'shall' thy little 'ought'
Be shamed to silence and humility.
Come mindling, I will show thee what 'twere meet
That thou shouldest shrink from marveling and flee
As unbelievable -- nay wonderingly
With dazed but still with faithful praises greet;
Draw near and listen to this sweetest sweet, --
Thy GOD, O mindling, shed His blood for thee!"

On the Cross of Calvary is manifested the greatest thing in the world, LOVE; the darkest mystery of the universe, SIN; and the highest expression of GOD's character, HOLINESS. "**For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**" (II Corinthians 5:21).

This manifestation is the atonement.

In a recently published life of Dr. Kali Charan Chatterjee, for forty-eight years one of the leading preachers of the Punjab, and a prince of the Church of India, we read the testimony: --

"It has often been asked why I renounced Hinduism and became a disciple of CHRIST. My answer is, that I was drawn almost unconsciously to CHRIST by His holy and blameless life, His devotion to the will of GOD and His works of mercy and benevolence toward suffering humanity. The excellence of His precepts as given in the Sermon on the Mount and His love of sinners won my admiration and my heart. I admired and loved Him. The incarnations I have been taught to worship, Rama, Krishna, Mahadeo and Kali were all incarnations of power -- they were heroes, sinful men of like passion with ourselves. CHRIST only appeared to me as holy and worthy to be adored as GOD. But the doctrine which decided me to embrace the Christian religion and make a public profession of my faith was the doctrine of the vicarious death and sufferings of CHRIST. I felt myself a sinner and found in CHRIST one who had died for my sins. **'For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.'** **'Not of works lest any man should boast.'** This was the burden of the thought of my heart, CHRIST has died, and in doing so, paid a debt which man could never pay. This conviction which has grown stronger and stronger with my growth in Christian life and experience has now become a part of my life. It is the differentiating line between Christianity and all other religions. I felt it so when I became a Christian, and I feel it most strongly now."

It is not only the vicarious death of a Saviour for sin that is the distinguishing mark of Christianity compared with all other religions, but the death of such a Saviour.

Everything depends on the nature and character of the Being who renders the substituted satisfaction.

Anselm in "the most profound, clear and logical tract of the eleventh century," *Cur Deus Homo*, remarks that "the life of the God-Man is so sublime and so precious that it is greater incomparably than those sins, which are exceeded beyond all power of estimation by His death; . . . I would sooner incur the aggregated guilt and misery of all the sins, past and future, of this world, and also of all the sin in addition that can possibly be conceived of, rather than incur the guilt of that one sin of killing the Lord of Glory."

Only Deity, so he teaches, can satisfy the claims of Deity; but man has sinned and must render satisfaction for man's sin; consequently the required and the adequate satisfaction must be rendered by a God-Man.

This may sound like Mediaeval scholastic reasoning, but we find the same profound truths embodied in the creeds used in public worship, and in the hymns of the Christian Church.

"There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He, only, could unlock the gate
Of Heaven and let us in."

The average man rebels at a doctrinal statement, but there is nothing that will so deepen our devotional spirit and save us from superficiality in prayer as meditation on these great truths.

The theology of the creeds and catechisms when rightly understood appeals to the heart quite as

much as to the head, to the imagination as well as to the understanding.

Meditation on "**the deep things of God**" in the Scriptures is inevitably difficult and may at first seem dry. But it is like practising scales in music; sooner or later the notes of dogma will become spiritual harmony and he who perseveres will know something more of "**the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!**" (Romans 11:33).

So we come back to Paul's words (nay to the inspired Word of GOD): "**They crucified the Lord of Glory**"; "**the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**"

In the person of JESUS CHRIST there are two natures.

The true Deity and true humanity are united but there is no mixtures of natures.

GOD suffered on the Cross, not in GOD's nature but in man's nature. "When the apostle," remarks Hooker, "saith of the Jews that they crucified the Lord of Glory (I Corinthians 2:8), we must needs understand the whole Person of CHRIST, who, being Lord of Glory, was indeed crucified, but not in that nature for which He is termed the Lord of Glory. In like manner, when the Son of Man, being on earth, affirmeth that the Son of Man was in Heaven at the same instant: "**And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven**" (John 3:13), by the Son of Man must necessarily be meant the whole Person of CHRIST, who being man upon earth, filled Heaven with His glorious presence, but not according to that nature for which the title of Man is given Him."

Just before He was condemned to death, JESUS CHRIST Himself before the high priest made the strongest possible confession of His humanity and His Deity. The account is given in each of the synoptic Gospels: "**Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven**" (Matthew 26:64) and "**And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven**" (Mark 14:62) and "**Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am**" (Luke 22:70). "**But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God**". **Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said [In Mark's account, I am]: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy**" (Matthew 26:63-65).

None of them, wrote Paul, understood, "**Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**" (I Corinthians 2:8).

So in the death of JESUS CHRIST on the Cross the human agony and disgrace is converted into a truly divine suffering by reason of the divinity that is united with the human soul and body in the unity of one self-consciousness.

The passion is infinite because the Person is infinite. The Son of GOD loved me and gave Himself for me. GOD purchased the Church with His own blood.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
